From Papyri to King James



The Transmission of the English Bible

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Cover illustration: Woodcut from the beginning of the Gospel of Luke from the Bishop's Bible, London, 1574, scanned courtesy of the Michigan Papyri Digitization Project.

INTRODUCTION

The University of Michigan Library is privileged to count within its collections a number of distinguished documents marking significant milestones in the history of the Biblical text. These items, spread across nations, peoples, and languages, trace the development of the Bible from ancient Egyptian manuscripts to the modern, printed book.

The English-language Bible came late in the long history of the preservation and transmission of the Biblical text. The Wycliffe English Bibles, the earliest complete Biblical manuscripts in English, appeared in the late 1380s and 1390s, or less than a century before the invention of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century. The roots of these texts are long and venerable, however, extending back some twelve centuries to the earliest New Testament documents and even further back to oral tradition and prehistory for the Old Testament.

This exhibit traces the roots of the King James Bible, showing both its direct ancestors and other, related religious works from C.E. 119 to C.E. 1611. Attention is also given to the materials upon which the Biblical text was preserved, from papyrus to parchment to paper.

As this exhibit opens during the Christmas holiday season, portions of the Bible relating to the Nativity are shown in several instances. New Testament texts are open to Luke's narrative of the Christmas story while the wall cases display facsimiles of the beginning of Luke from the Gutenberg Bible as well as works by Albrecht Dürer and illustrations from richly illuminated manuscripts.

This exhibit is a revised version of an earlier exhibition, *Highlights in the Transmission of the English Bible: The Christmas Story,* prepared by Helen S. Butz. Since that time, Kathleen Dow, Kathryn Beam, and Traianos Gagos have contributed to this annual exhibit.

CASE 1

The vast majority of the earliest Biblical and related manuscripts were written in ink on papyrus, which is a writing surface made from strips of a water plant found in the Nile region of Egypt. Many papyri from ancient times in Egypt have survived in excellent condition because of the dry climate. The University of Michigan has the largest collection of papyrus manuscripts in the Western hemisphere. All pieces in Cases 1 and 2 are written in Greek, except for Michigan Manuscript 167, which is written in Sahidic Coptic.

P. Mich. Inv. 193. Amulet. *Circa 2nd century C.E.*

Written in Greek in a crude school hand on a strip of papyrus which was cut from the part of a roll that was left blank after entering tax receipts, this early Christian amulet is interesting because it combines magical and Christian elements. The papyrus is of good quality. Near the left margin, the browner strip is part of another sheet glued to this one. The ink, which was black and thick, has run and has blurred some of the letters. Note the blot in line 7.

In line 5, the Judeo-Christian name for God, "Lord ruler of all," is followed by a misspelled version of the well-known magical palindrome (a word read the same backwards and forwards): "ablanathanalba."

P. Mich. Inv. 106. Census Declaration. *C.E. 119*

While not a Biblical document, this census fragment attests to the practice of census taking very early in recorded history and thus serves to support aspects of the nativity narrative in the Gospel of Luke. The house-by-house census was required every 14 years, and the declaration shown here was prepared for the census in the year 118, at Bacchias, a village southwest of modern Cairo.

> *Horos, son of Horos and Herieus, grandson of Horos,*
> *declares himself, a cultivator of state-land, 48 years old,*
> *with a scar on his left eyebrow;*
> *Tapekusis, his wife, 45 years old;*
> *Horos, their son [age lost] with no identifying marks;*

Horion, another son, 1 year old, with no mark;
Horion, his brother, age 35, with a scar in the middle of his forehead;
Thenatumis, wife of his brother, age 31, no mark;
Horos, their son, 1 year old, with no mark.

The nomographos (notary) of Bacchias states that he wrote the above; three additional officials then signed it.

P. Mich. Inv. 263. ***Libellus.*** *C.E. 250*

A certificate in Greek issued during the Decian persecution to a woman and her daughter from the village of Theadelphia in Egypt. It testifies that they had obeyed the imperial edict to participate in pagan sacrifices as proof of their loyalty to the government. Since faithful Christians would not sacrifice to pagan gods, the edict served as a means for identifying Christians and making them liable for punishment or imprisonment. Decius, emperor from C.E. 249 to 251, conducted vigorous persecutions of Christians in an effort to revive the Roman state religion. The official who signed this wrote his name boldly: Hermas.

P. Mich. Inv. 4922. ***Xenophon and a Christian Text.***
1st/2nd, and 4th/5th century C.E.

Two Greek papyrus fragments from a roll that originally contained the "Education of Cyrus" by the Athenian writer Xenophon. Pieces cut from that roll were used around the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century to contain notes, or a draft of a Christian homily, or a commentary on the Exodus, or a work that might have dealt with the baptism, especially of those new to the doctrines and disciplines of Christianity.

The second text was written at irregular angles on the back and front, wherever there was blank space left by the first scribe. The crossing of the Red Sea is mentioned on the front and back of fragment A and on the back of fragment B. The twelve springs and seventy palms found at Aelim are mentioned on the front of fragment B.

P. Mich. Inv. 917. ***The Shepherd of Hermas.*** *2nd century C.E.*

Being the most important non-Biblical Christian papyrus manuscript at the University of Michigan, this codex consists of sixty-two fragmentary pages. The work in Greek is of an apocalyptic nature, containing the author's prophetic visions, and was probably composed as early as the second century. It was held in great reverence by the early Church.

The Michigan manuscript is the oldest copy and by far the largest of the known papyrus copies of this text.

P. Mich. Inv. 5553. ***Melito, Bishop of Sardis: Homily on the Passion.*** *4th century C.E.*

The same papyrus codex that contained the last chapters of Enoch (see Case 2) also included eight leaves bearing a Christian homily almost in its entirety. This was identified by Professor Campbell Bonner of the University of Michigan as the "Homily on the Passion" by a certain Melito, Bishop of Sardis, who lived during the reign of the emperor Marcus Aurelius (C.E. 161–180). References to the homily occur in early Christian literature, but until the discovery of this codex, the homily itself had been lost. Eight more leaves are kept at the Chester Beatty Collection in Dublin, Ireland.

CASE 2

P. Mich. Inv. 5552. ***Book of Enoch.*** *4th century C.E.*

One of six papyrus leaves from a codex -- two are housed at Michigan and four in the Chester Beatty Collection in Dublin, Ireland -- which constitutes the only known Greek text of the last chapters of the apocryphal Book of Enoch.

The original language of this work was Hebrew or Aramaic, and for several centuries, until the discovery of this papyrus, it was known only through an Ethiopic translation. Fragments in Aramaic from various chapters, however, have been found among the manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

P. Mich. Inv. 5554. ***Fragments of Deuteronomy.*** *Circa C.E. 150*

Fragments of a papyrus manuscript in codex format; originally comprised the Septuagint version (that is, a Greek translation from the Hebrew) of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Portions of fifty other leaves from the same codex are in the Chester Beatty Collection in Dublin, Ireland.

Written in a fine calligraphic hand, this manuscript was probably produced for a Christian community. This may be deduced from the fact that the fragment is from a codex, that is, there is writing on both sides of the leaf. A scroll, the format most often used by Jewish scribes, is usually found with writing only on one side.

P. Mich. Inv. 1570. ***Matthew 26:19-52.*** *3rd/4th century C.E.*

Written in a somewhat unskilled hand, this fragment is interesting for the copy error and correction found in line 12. Although it was possible to "erase" a mistake on papyrus by washing it out, in this case the scribe simply crossed out the error and wrote in the correction.

The fragment is also important textually in that it contains an account of the Lord's Supper and the Betrayal and because of the evidence it gives of the presence in Egypt at this early date of the text preferred by the Western Church.

P. Mich. Inv. 6238. ***Epistles of Paul.*** *Circa 2nd quarter of 2nd century C.E.*

Two leaves from a papyrus codex in Greek of the Letters of Saint Paul, dating from about C.E. 125 to C.E. 150. The codex, generally referred to as $\mathfrak{p}46$, is thought originally to have contained 104 leaves. There are now 86 leaves extant: 30 are at the University of Michigan and 56 are in the Chester Beatty Collection in Dublin, Ireland.

The discovery of this codex in 1931 provided a text at least a century older than the Vatican and Sinaitic codices, the oldest authorities on which the text had previously rested.

Displayed on the left is a leaf containing Ephesians I:1-20; on the right are the opening paragraphs of the Epistle to the Hebrews, preceded by the last line of the Letter to the Romans.

Mich. Ms 167. ***Psalms.*** *Late 6th or early 7th century C.E.*

Written on parchment in Coptic, that is, Egyptian written for the most part in Greek characters, this manuscript contains Psalms 51-150. It is one of five manuscripts that were said to have been found buried in a jar with a few coins near the Gizeh pyramids. From the colophons they have been identified as the work of monks in the large and important monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara. Sir Chester Beatty purchased the three best preserved manuscripts and the coins found in the jar in 1924-25, and the University of Michigan, through Francis W. Kelsey, the other two.

This manuscript was rebound at the Vatican, and the only original binding fragments known to be in our possession are the bone fasteners now on the replica that was reconstructed by C.T. Lamacraft. Both the original and the replica are displayed.

CASE 3

Towards the eighth and ninth centuries the use of papyrus for manuscripts began to decline. Instead, documents and books were written on parchment, or vellum, which is a skin (generally sheep, kid, or calf) that has been soaked, dried, scraped, and rubbed until thin and smooth.

Mich. Ms. 1. ***Vulgate Bible.*** *13th century*

This translation of the Bible into Latin by Jerome (circa 342-420) was the standard scriptural text in Western Christendom for a millennium, and for much longer in the Roman Catholic faith. The term "vulgate" derives from Latin and means the "common" version.

The manuscript Bible is open to a portrait of St. Paul that illuminates the initial which begins the text of the Letter to the Romans. This manuscript was written in France or northern Italy. Such illuminations as this involve the decoration of a manuscript with gold or silver as well as paint, the result being a combination of ornament and illustration. Illuminated initials begin each book of this Bible; five have portraits. The reader will note the pervasive use of a system of abbreviations which scribes developed to save time and parchment.

Mich. Ms. 150. ***Gospel of Luke with Commentary.***
12th century

This Latin translation of Luke's gospel is copied into the center column of each page, and surrounded by commentary thought to be extracts from writings by several early church fathers and saints, including Augustine, Ambrose, Bede, and Jerome. The copy may have been made at a monastery in the lower Rhine Valley. It was in the library of the Premonstratensian Abbey of Parc near Louvain, Belgium, until it was sold in 1829.

The script is largely littera textura, a sharp and angular style of handwriting in which the letters appear to be woven together to form a line (from the Latin *texere,* to weave). The beginning words of new phrases are in majuscule, a script that utilizes only upper-case or capital letters. The page shown on the left is the last page of the *breviarum,* which contains brief summary sentences of each chapter of Luke.

Mich. Ms. 8. ***Service Book.*** *Circa 14th century*

A church Service Book in Greek, written about the fourteenth century in ink on parchment, including readings from the Old and New Testaments. The manuscript is of particular interest for its eight palimpsest – that is, "recycled" – leaves, one of which is shown. At the bottom of the right-hand page can be seen the faint remains of writing that have been scraped off so that the parchment could be reused. This was a common practice, as parchment was quite costly. Scholars have determined that the original writing in Greek uncials, which contains parts of the New Testament epistles, dates from about the seventh century.

Mich. Ms. 22. ***Gospel Book.*** *11th-12th century*

This Byzantine book contains the four Gospels in Greek. The writing is minuscule and, in contrast to the Service Book (Mich. Ms. 8), the words are separated. Colorful miniatures in a somewhat flat style reflect their Byzantine origins. A miniature depicting the Evangelist Luke is shown.

This manuscript has lost its binding, perhaps due to a fire that browned and charred the edges, but that fortunately left the text

block intact. The result is a book that provides an excellent opportunity to study the construction of a luxury manuscript thought to have been produced in the eleventh or early twelfth century somewhere in the provinces of Byzantium.

Mich. Ms. 141. ***Armenian New Testament.*** *1161*

The four Gospels in Armenian, written in the town of Edessa by the scribe Vasil, for two patrons, Christopher and his wife, Aygots. This manuscript is illuminated with colorful headpieces, initials, and marginal decorations, and with two full-page portraits. The portrait shown depicts Saint Mark.

Armenian translations of the Bible were among the earliest, stemming from the fifth century, and are considered to be exceptionally accurate. They sometimes are called the Queen of the Translations.

CASE 4

Wycliffe Bible. *1388*

A facsimile of the first translation of the New Testament in English. This landmark in the history of the English Bible and of the English language, together with a translation of the Old Testament made during the same period, is frequently referred to as the Wycliffe Bible. Biblical scholars, however, consider it doubtful that this translation from the Vulgate is the actual work of John Wycliffe alone, although his inspiration for the work is uncontested.

Wycliffe, a Yorkshireman, was a major intellectual figure during the latter part of the 14th century. Theologian, philosopher, and reformer, his influence on the thinking of such churchmen as Hus and Luther was so significant that Wycliffe came to be called the Morningstar of the Reformation.

Towards the close of the Middle Ages the use of parchment for manuscripts slowly gave way to paper. But the truly significant revolution took place in the mid-fifteenth century with the invention of moveable type for the production of books and documents. The impact of the printed book on education, science, politics, commerce, international relations – virtually every phase of civilization – is beyond calculation.

Gutenberg or 42-Line Bible. *Mainz, before 1456*

An original leaf (paper) from the 42-Line Bible printed in Mainz, Germany, before 1456. This is commonly referred to as the Gutenberg Bible and is the first book in a Western European language to have been printed using moveable type.

About 200 copies were printed; 45 complete or substantially complete copies still exist. The intent to carry on the visual characteristics of a manuscript is evident in the spaces left for decorative initials as well as in the hand rubrication. Note that while there are chapter headings, there are no verse marks.

The page displayed shows the end of Chapter 57 and the beginning of Chapter 58 of the Book of Isaiah. The text is the Latin Vulgate, the standard text since Jerome's completion of his translation in 404.

First Printed Greek New Testament. *Basel, J. Froben, 1516*

Erasmus was commissioned to prepare the Greek text for publication by the renowned Basel printer, Johann Froben, who held exclusive rights granted by the Pope to issue a Greek New Testament. The work was undertaken rather hurriedly and based on only six Greek manuscripts, dating from the eleventh to fifteenth centuries. The Latin text, printed parallel with the Greek, is Erasmus's own translation. This version ultimately became the foundation of the New Testament "textus receptus," the basis for the King James Version a century later.

Tyndale New Testament. *Antwerp, 1536*

The first printed edition of the New Testament in English was the translation by William Tyndale, probably printed by Peter Schoeffer, the Younger, at Worms, in 1525 or 1526. Only two complete copies of that first printing still exist, for the translation had been officially condemned by the English bishops, and all copies that could be found were burned. Tyndale himself was condemned for heresy and burned at the stake in 1536, the year in which the edition shown here was printed.

Tyndale's translation was influenced by a number of the earlier versions of the New Testament including the Vulgate, Luther's German translation, and Erasmus's translation (3rd edition) as well as earlier Greek and Hebrew texts. The result of Tyndale's labors was a particularly felicitous English translation which more heavily influenced the King James Version than all the others combined.

CASE 5

Coverdale Bible. *Zurich?, 1535*

A leaf from the *editio princeps* (that is, the first printed edition) of the complete Bible in English, translated and edited by Miles Coverdale, a Yorkshireman. It was probably printed in Zurich. Coverdale leaned heavily on Tyndale's translation, Luther's German version, a Swiss-German text by Zwingli and Leo Juda, and the Latin version of Sanctes Pagninus rather than the Greek and Hebrew originals.

Coverdale's version included the Apocrypha (the books between the Testaments) from which a page of the Book of Esdras is shown.

Estienne New Testament. *Geneva, 1551*

An edition of Erasmus's Greek and Latin New Testament together with the Vulgate. This printing by Robert Estienne (or Stephanus) is notable for the fact that in it the chapters were for the first time divided into verses (a total of 7,959). Chapter divisions had been introduced somewhat earlier, reputedly by Stephen Langton in the thirteenth century.

Geneva Bible. *Geneva, R. Hall, 1560*

Issued in a smaller, more convenient format than its predecessors, the Geneva Bible was produced by Protestant refugees in Switzerland, after having fled the Roman Catholic persecution in England under Queen Mary. This was the first English Bible to use verse divisions and the first to be printed in Roman type. It is sometimes also called the "Breeches Bible," because of the translation of Genesis 3:7: "they [Adam and Eve] knewe that they were naked, and they sewed fig tre leaues together, and made them selues breeches."

Douay Bible. Rheims, 1582 and Douai, 1609-10

The first edition of the Roman Catholic version of the New Testament in English. It was translated from the Vulgate, and printed at Rheims in 1582 under the auspices of English Catholic refugees from the rule of the Protestant Queen Elizabeth. This translation exerted considerable influence on the King James Version in terms of vocabulary and distinctive phrases and expressions.

The Old Testament portion was issued 1609-1610, after the English College had moved from Rheims to Douai. The entire enterprise is generally referred to as the Douay Bible.

CASE 6

Kralitz Bible. Willimowitz, Moravia, 1579-1593

The followers of Jan Hus, the Bohemian Brethren, while under heavy persecution by the Roman Catholic Church, produced a Czech Bible under clandestine conditions. It was printed in Kralitz at the castle of Baron John von Zerotin, near Willimowitz in Moravia. The translation was made by a group of eight scholars, whose text and commentaries were to become a standard for study of both the Bible and the Bohemian language until modern times. Once printed, the Bible was zealously suppressed by the Jesuits; hence its extreme rarity today.

The Great Bible. London, E. Whitchurch, 1541

First published in 1539, the Great Bible is a revision by Coverdale of Matthew's Bible (1537), corrected with the aid of Sebastian Münster's Latin translation of the Old Testament, Erasmus's version of the New Testament, the Vulgate, and other sources. Coverdale worked under the patronage of Thomas Cromwell; thus the version is sometimes called "Cromwell's Bible." It is also known as "Cranmer's Version," because of the addition of a prologue by Thomas Cranmer for the 1540 edition.

On display is the sixth issue of the Great Bible, the fifth with Cranmer's prologue. It was printed by Edward Whitchurch who, eight years later, also printed one of the issues of the first edition of the Book of Common Prayer.

The Bishops' Bible. London, R. Jugge, 1574

First published in 1568 by R. Jugge, the Bishops' Bible is a revised version of the Great Bible, produced by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, with the assistance of many bishops and biblical scholars. This revision was undertaken in reaction to the Geneva Bible, but never achieved its popularity or influence.

CASE 7

King James Bible. London, R. Barker, 1611

Sometimes also called the Authorized Version, this was, for 350 years, the standard version wherever the English language was spoken. The translation was enthusiastically supported by James I of England. It is a revision of the Bishops' Bible, taking into account the versions by Tyndale, Matthew, and Coverdale as well as the Great and Geneva Bibles. There were two issues in 1611, sometimes distinguished as the "He" or "She" Bible. The copy exhibited is the "She" (corrected) version in which Ruth 3:15 reads: "... and she went into the city."

Miniature Chained Bible & Lectern

"Bibles were so rare in olden times, it was necessary to chain them to lecterns and other places .... The chaining of single books in churches doubtless originated in the injunctions given by Edward VI to 'the Clergy and the Laietie' in 1547 and printed by Grafton in which they are ordered 'to provide within three moneths next after the visitacion one boke of the whole Bible of the largest volume in English, and within one twelve moneth after the saied visitacion the Paraphrasis of Erasmus the same to be sette uppe in some convenient place within the churche.'

"This injunction was repeated by Queen Elisabeth in 1559, and although nothing was mentioned about chains, it seems very probable that the Churchwardens would for their own sake adopt that plan of protecting their property." — W. Blades *"Books in Chains."*

The above material is taken from literature enclosed with the miniature chained Bible and lectern.

WALL CASE 1

The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible, edited by G.E. Wright and F.V. Filson; rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956

The Oxford Map of Egypt. Beirut, Lebanon: GEO projects, 1981

These two maps identify the principal centers of importance in Graeco-Roman Egypt and the early Christian era, including in particular the Fayyum region and the town of Karanis where most of Michigan's papyri were preserved prior to their discovery and acquisition during the 1920s and '30s. That work was carried out in large part by Professor Francis W. Kelsey, who first visited Egypt in 1920, returning with 617 papyri. These formed the basis of a collection that now numbers over 10,000 pieces. The expeditions at Karanis from 1924 to 1935 were conducted in the first two years under the supervision of Prof. Kelsey, and continued by Professor Enoch Peterson.

Atlas of the Christian Church, ed. by Henry Chadwick and G.R. Evans. New York: Facts on File Publications, 1987

The Biblical text survived in the West for centuries due largely to the work of monastic societies. Begun as early as 320 C.E. in the Nile Valley by the monk St. Pachomius, communities were established usually with an economic base as rural cooperatives enclosed by a wall to make a sacred precinct. Similar societies were founded in Egypt in the Wadi Natrum, in the Judean desert, in Asia Minor by Basil of Caesarea in 370-79, and in North Africa by Augustine (354-430) who had experienced such houses in Milan and Rome. This map illustrates the spread of monasticism, identifying in particular some of the centers known for unusually fine book production.

Atlas of the Christian Church, ed. by Henry Chadwick and G. R. Evans. New York: Facts on File Publications, 1987

The printing press, the Reformation, the Renaissance, and the development of nationalism all played important roles in the emergence of the Bible in vernacular languages. This map identifies principal European printing centers of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries and illustrates the spread of Protestantism during that time.

WALL CASE 2

Books of Hours, or private prayer books, became popular in the late Middle Ages. The basis of these devotional works was the Office of the Virgin, special prayers that were added to the Divine Office of the Roman Catholic Church during the tenth century. In addition to the prayers to the Virgin, Books of Hours usually contained devotions (prayers, psalms, hymns, and readings) for the eight canonical hours: Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. These were commonly followed by the Hours of the Cross, the Hours of the Holy Ghost, the Hours of the Passion, the seven penitential psalms, the Litany, prayers to various saints, and the Office of the Dead.

Not subject to clerical control, these prayer books could be fashioned and decorated to meet the individual and personal predilections of the wealthy or noble patron. Their popularity peaked at just that point in the evolution of the manuscript book when the French late-Gothic period was reaching its zenith. As a result, the most sumptuous illuminations may be found in those Books of Hours created during the fifteenth century.

Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry, 1413-1417

Facsimile of a Book of Hours commissioned by Jean, Duke of Berry, with miniatures executed by the Limbourg brothers. Original in the Musée Condé, Chantilly, France.

The Visconti Hours. Before 1395

Facsimile of a Book of Hours commissioned by Giangaleazzo Visconti. In two volumes, the illuminations of the first part were by Giovannino de' Grassi; the work was finished by Luchino Belbello after Grassi's death. Original in the Biblioteca Nazionale,

Florence, Italy.

WALL CASE 3

Gutenberg or 42-Line Bible. Mainz, before 1456

Facsimile of the prologue and the beginning of the Gospel according to Luke from the Gutenberg or 42-Line Bible, printed in Mainz, Germany. Original in the Gutenberg-Museum, Mainz, Germany.

WALL CASE 4

Gebetbuch Karls des Kühnen, vel potius, Stundenbuch der Maria von Burgund. 15th century

Facsimile of an illuminated Flemish Book of Hours from the second half of the fifteenth century. The miniatures are in part attributed to the renowned artist, Master of Mary of Burgundy. Original in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Austria.

Mich. Ms. 245. Book of Hours. The Netherlands, 2nd quarter of 15th century

An original illuminated manuscript written on particularly fine vellum, it is an example of a more commonplace late Medieval/early Renaissance personal prayer book containing devotions and offices to be said or sung at the canonical hours.

Slightly smaller than usual (a pocket size of 3" x 4"), this book is also somewhat different textually. The Psalms, for example, are abbreviated, as if intended to be said by someone in a hurry, traveling, or in military service. In addition, it seems to have been made for an English patron. The Hours of the Virgin are according to English use, and the Litany of the Saints includes English figures such as Oswald, Cuthbert, Alban, and Edmund.

Reichenauer Evangelistar. 11th century

A liturgical book rather than a Book of Hours, this work contains the Gospel readings for the church year. The illuminations, decorative elements, and uncial script in the Ottonian style contrast sharply with the sophistication and grace of the Books of Hours produced several centuries later.

This Catholic evangelarium was most likely produced during the early eleventh century at the Benedictine Abbey on Reichenau, an island in Lake Constance, Germany. The original is in the Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatlichen Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Germany.

WALL CASE 5

Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), one of the most prolific and successful printmakers in the history of visual arts, is most famous for his woodcuts and copper engravings, although he also worked in paint, creating a number of altarpieces, portraits, and self-portraits. Without a doubt, he was the greatest artist of the Renaissance period in Germany, and was recognized as such by his contemporaries to the extent that documents dated around 1500 refer to him as "alter Apelles," a reverential comparison to the quasi-mythological, Classical Greek painter, Apelles.

Dürer, known for his extreme piety, was caught up in the religious ferment in Germany in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Early on, Dürer embraced the spirit of the Reformation, and with the woodcut series The *Apocalypse* and engravings depicting the Babylonian Whore, created symbolic visual attacks against the perceived excess, decadence, and self-absorption of the Church in Rome. From a different perspective, this religious nature also shines through in the sensitive handling of facial expressions, limb and drapery placement, and overall composition as Dürer tells Biblical stories through his exquisite use of line. "God is honored," the artist said, "when it appears that He has given such insight to a creature in whom such art resides."

The nineteenth century saw a revival of interest in Dürer and his work, particularly during the tercentennial of his death. It was then that societies devoted to the artist began to spring up, the first,

Dürer-Verein, appearing in Germany in 1817. The Dürer Society, based in London in the latter part of the nineteenth century, chose to honor the master by producing high-quality reproductions of a selection of the artist's prints, of which several are on display here. The facsimiles are from the *Publications* of the Dürer Society, London, England, 1898-1911.

The Annunciation. *Woodcut, circa 1504-1511*

The Nativity. *Woodcut, circa 1504-1511*

WALL CASE 6

Facsimiles of works by Albrecht Dürer, from the *Publications* of the Dürer Society, London, England, 1898-1911.

The Adoration of the Magi. *Woodcut, 1511*

The Virgin Seated by a Wall. *Engraving, 1514*

The Virgin with the Child in Swaddling Clothes. *Engraving 1520*

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